One dead, 3,000 stuck as floods ravage Elegu

Disaster. Most of the affected are traders and farmers. They are yet to receive assistance from government and humanitarian agencies.

BY JULIUS OCUNGI
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

AMURU. One person has been confirmed dead while more than 3,000 people stranded by flash floods in Elegu Trading Centre, Atiak Sub-county, Amuru District are homeless.

The Tuesday morning flood followed heavy torrential rain being experienced in northern Uganda which forced Unyama River to burst its banks.

Majority of those affected are local traders and peasant farmers in Elegu Zone II parish and Bibia West parishes who lost merchandize and food stuffs worth millions of Shillings.

Mr Jimmy Patrick Okema, the Aswa Region police spokesperson, identified the deceased as Charles Kawoya, 30, a driver, and resident of Masaka District.

He said the deceased was swept by the floods as he tried driving a vehicle through Unyama Bridge in Otong Parish, Pabbo Sub-county.

Mr Okema said they have also received unconfirmed cases of missing persons, adding that police are investigating them.

The government is yet to assist the victims. By yesterday, the victims had camped by the roadside with some of their household property pondering their next move.

Mr Hassan Siraj, one of the traders, said the flood destroyed all his merchandize worth Shs15 million.

"I have lost everything I had. I'm left without anything, no money, no clothes, just me," Mr Siraj said.

Another affected trader, Ms Gift Zaida, said she only managed to escape with few items she removed from her shop when the flood hit the area.

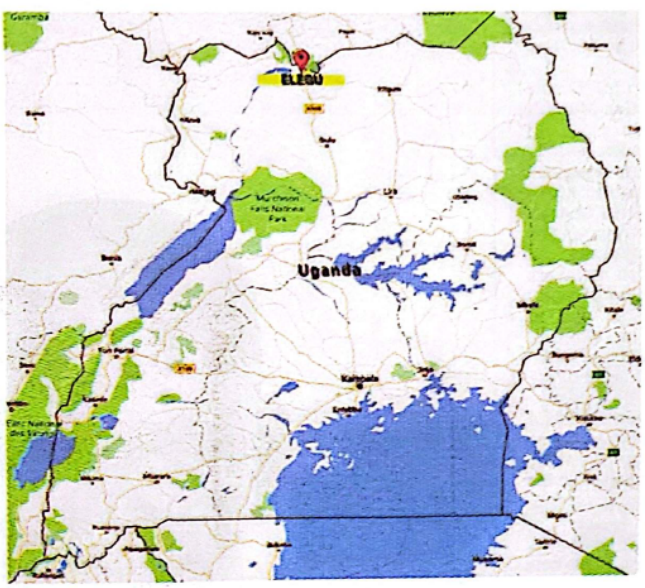
The district chairperson, Mr Michael Lakony, said the district doesn't have any extra budget to help the affected people, adding that the conditions at Elegu Trading Centre are horrible.

"We expect the government to intervene in helping the affected communities. As Amuru District local government, we don't have any fund for such emergencies, those affected and the trail of destruction are beyond our means," Mr Lakony said.

He said the floods are also posing a health risk to the people.



Counting losses. Houses submerged in water following heavy torrential rains which forced Unyama River to burst its banks in Elegu Trading Centre, Amuru District on Tuesday. Below is the location of the affected area. PHOTO BY JULIUS OCUNGI



Mr Martin Owor, the commissioner for relief, disaster preparedness and management in the Office of the Prime Minister, however, said the government had already sent relief food to the affected people.

He said two trailers containing 800 bags of rice, 100 bags of maize flour and 10 bags of beans were dispatched on Wednesday from Kampala.

He also said Uganda Red Cross offered to provide tents and household items such as blankets, cups and jerry cans, among others, to the affected people.

Not safe yet

Mr Owor said the government has sent police marine to conduct search missions, adding that they will be stationed in the area since there could be possibilities of another flood since the rainy season started in the region.

He said they will plan in the near future to expand the river channel and boundaries to avoid flash flood affecting the community.

However, by press time, Mr Akule Kasim, the chairperson of Elegu Zone II said they had not received any relief items from the government or humanitarian aid agencies.

This is the third time in a period of three years Elegu Trading Centre is being submerged by floods.

The disaster struck the area in May 2015 and August 2014.

BY ANTHONY WESAKA
awesaka@ug.nationmedia.com

Supreme Court now ...